

FREE DRAMATHERAPY SESSIONS FOR SURREY FAMILIES

Guildford Shakespeare Company's (GSC) are accepting submissions and referrals for their free dramatherapy sessions for teenagers with mental health difficulties and their parents from 26 April.

Now in its third year, *With My Eyes* is a unique course of free dramatherapy workshops for young people aged 12-18, which also involves parents taking part alongside their children.

Working with registered dramatherapists, *With My Eyes* allows families to break the cycle of mental health issues in a safe environment. Both generations are given the chance to work together, creating a sense of mutual understanding. Parents and children are then split to enable each group to have tailored sessions, while building a new support network.

Roya Hamid, dramatherapist: *"Dramatherapy supports mental health and wellbeing and facilitates personal growth by creating a safe space. We work with all techniques associated with the theatre – storytelling, movement, voice, puppets, masks – but for non-performance purposes... you don't need any performance experience."*

Previous participants of the programme have cited increased confidence and self-esteem, improved communication within their families and a reduction of the symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as invaluable peer support.

Previous Participant: *"It was good to hear from other parents experiencing similar difficulties, as it can be quite a lonely journey. It provides a supported space for these young people, who may lack the usual opportunities to work with peers."*

The course is completely free to attend and includes group trips to GSC's professional theatre shows, which are a great bonding experience and generates further topics of conversation.

Francesca McNally, Education & Outreach Operations Manager: *"Our facilitators use their extensive knowledge of Shakespeare to enable participants to explore fictional scenarios which parallel their own. It keeps issues at a safe distance and allows the group to access different viewpoints through taking on different roles."*

Any families with children that have a history of mental health or social difficulties will be considered. Families can be referred from professional mental health workers including CAMHS, School Inclusion Officers, or local organisations and charities with a similar remit. Families can also self-refer.

A short film detailing the course can be found on the GSC website, along with full details on how to register/refer www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk/bravenewworldcommunity

With My Eyes is made possible through funding from The Community Foundation for Surrey and is part of a wider programme of GSC's ongoing programme of work within the community, *Brave New World*.

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Note to Editors

Guildford Shakespeare Company is an award-winning, site-responsive theatre company. Established in 2006 by actor-managers Sarah Gobran and Matt Pinches, it has produced over 40 shows in unique venues including Guildford Cathedral, Watts Gallery, West Horsley Place and a Flemish Spiegeltent. In 2015, Brian Blessed OBE played the title role in *King Lear*. Its Education and Outreach works with over 5000 people young and old every year including free-to-access social inclusion programmes. GSC is one of the largest producers of home-grown theatre in the region.